IRS SAYS SOME TAX PREPAYMENTS WON'T BE DEDUCTIBLE | PAGE C1

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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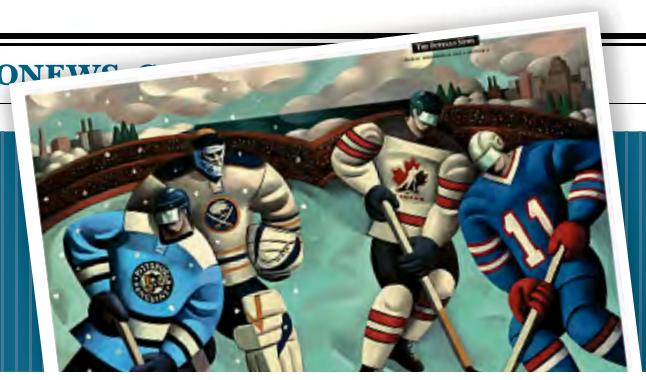

USA *vs.* CANADA PREVIEW

» 'Bitter' rivalry goes outside for World Juniors at New Era Field today

» Winter Classic – Vogl and Harrington take a look back. | SPORTS, PAGE B1

TOP 10 LOCAL BUSINESS STORIES

BIG PROJECTS, BIGGER PROMISES

Amid a tightening labor market, major construction projects became functioning parts of the region's economy in 2017

Derek Gee/Buffalo News

Medical Campus newcomer: The new John R. Oishei Children's Hospital opened on Nov. 8.

BY DAVID ROBINSON / NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

After three years of construction and anticipation, 2017 was the year big projects came to fruition. ¶ From the opening of John R. Oishei Children's Hospital and the new University at Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences on the rapidly expanding Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, to the beginning of production at the Tesla solar panel factory in South Buffalo, big construction projects of years past now are functioning parts of the Buffalo Niagara economy. ¶ The question now is how much of an impact those projects, along with a boomlet of redevelopment projects turning old downtown buildings into new apartments and commercial space, will have on the region's growth going forward. ¶ For now, the impact has been limited. The pace of hiring last year slowed, despite the high-profile projects opening up, as the labor market tightened and the region's population remained stagnant. ¶ But there is the promise of more. Further adaptive reuse projects to convert old buildings into new uses are in the works. Hundreds more workers are expected to be hired as production ramps up at Tesla. And new businesses, like Strategic Financial Services, are promising to become big employers in the coming years. | SEE BUSINESS ON PAGE A4

On the Web:
View more of The News' Year in Review coverage at BuffaloNews.com/2017, including:

• The top business images of 2017, as selected by each News photographer.

Social Services commissioner abruptly resigns

At Poloncarz's request, Dirschberger steps down over criminal probe

BY HAROLD MCNEIL AND SANDRA TAN
NEWS STAFF REPORTERS

Al Dirschberger is the subject "of an alleged serious incident involving a subordinate employee."

Al Dirschberger abruptly resigned Thursday as commissioner of Erie County Social Services at the request of the county executive after it was learned he was under criminal investigation for an incident that allegedly occurred in Albany earlier in December.

At a news conference Thursday evening, Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz announced that he had requested Dirschberger's resignation earlier that day after concluding an internal investigation into the allegations. As of Thursday, there were no charges filed against Dirschberger, according to several sources.

Poloncarz said he was made aware on Saturday "of an alleged serious incident involving the commissioner and a subordinate employee in Albany, N.Y., during a conference on Dec. 5 or 6 of this year."

"I immediately engaged senior staff, including the county attorney and the personnel commissioner – who was and still is in the United Kingdom on vacation – in reviewing the allegation and to examine relevant county personnel policies," said Poloncarz.

He also said that an Albany police detective returned his call later that day.

"I informed him that I had no interest in interfering in his investigation, but because of the critical importance of Mr. Dirschberger's position, I needed information. I asked him whether Mr. Dirschberger was a suspect in a criminal investigation in Albany County. He confirmed that Commissioner Dirschberger was a person of

See **Dirschberger** on Page A5

MUSICAL TREASURE FINDS NEW LIFE

A long-forgotten harpsichord found at Kleinhans Music Hall is being restored and will return to use with the Buffalo Chamber Players. *Story on Page B1*

Cab company plans holiday boycott in city

Uber, Lyft spurred Liberty ultimatum

BY SAMANTHA CHRISTMANN
NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

If you're looking for a ride in Buffalo this New Year's Eve, don't call Liberty Yellow Cab.

Owner Bill Yuhnke intends to follow through with an ultimatum he gave the Buffalo Common Council earlier this month: regulate Uber and Lyft in the city or go without service from the region's largest taxi company on the busiest night of the year.

"We're still hoping for an eleventh-hour reprieve but, as things stand right now, the boycott is on," said Tony Farina, a spokesman for Liberty.

With no resolution in sight, Liberty said it will keep its roughly 450 cabs in the suburbs Sunday night, rather than ferry passengers to and from the city's bars, restaurants and parties. Liberty cabs won't be stationed at taxi stands in the city, and cars won't be dispatched into or out of the city limits.

Liberty and Airport Taxi had petitioned the Council to either ease regulations on taxis, require companies like Uber and Lyft to abide by the same

See **Taxis** on Page A5

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WEATHER
Frigid, times of snow. High 18, low 10. Details on Page C10.

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